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Comparative Analysis of Kurdish Rhythms And Dance Movements

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ABSTRACT

This study is the result of the author's effort to document and compare the movements and melodies in Kurdish dance. The geographical expanse of Kurdistan, with its numerous regions and the resulting diversity in the execution of dances, makes a unified and comprehensive study of dance across the entire region a challenging task, requiring considerable time and collaborative work by a team of researchers. Therefore, this dissertation focuses on the prevalent dances in the central part of Kurdistan province, specifically the city of Sanandaj. The dissertation comprises a preface, abstract, introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter is dedicated to the history, geography, and musical culture of Kurdistan. The second chapter records and analyzes the music. The third chapter delves into descriptive discussions on Kurdish dance and examines the movements in each dance. The fourth chapter is a comparative analysis of music and movement, concluding with findings from the aforementioned chapters. The methodology employed in this research is primarily field-based, except for the information in the first chapter, which is sourced from historical and cultural books on Kurdistan.

KEYWORDS

- Benčopi: Side partner in the Kurdish dance circle.
- Peštpâ: A type of Kurdish rhythm.
- Čopi: Kurdish group dance.
- Čopikeš: Leader in Kurdish dance.
- Čapi: A type of Kurdish rhythm.
- Xân amiri: A type of Kurdish rhythm.
- Dasmâl: Handkerchief used by dancers in Kurdish dance.
- Zangi: Derived from "zang" and "Zanzibar," a type of Kurdish rhythm.
- Sejâr: Three times; a type of Kurdish rhythm.
- Šalân: Equivalent to "shal" in Persian, a type of Kurdish rhythm.
- Fatâhpâšâi: A type of Kurdish rhythm.
- Halparke: Literally means jumping or leaping, synonymous with "dance" in Persian.

1. INTRODUCTION

Kurdistan, a region that spans across the borders of Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria, is not only geographically significant but also culturally and historically rich. The Kurdish people, who have inhabited this region for millennia, possess a unique cultural identity shaped by their history, language, and traditions. This study aims to explore these aspects in depth, focusing particularly on the historical, geographical, and musical dimensions of Kurdish culture.

The historical origins of the Kurdish people are a topic of considerable scholarly interest and debate. Various historical references and archaeological findings suggest that the Kurds are descendants of ancient Aryan tribes, such who lived in the mountainous regions surrounding the upper reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. These references are critical for understanding the roots of Kurdish identity and provide evidence for

the long-standing presence of Kurdish people in this region. For instance, ancient Assyrian tablets and Greek historical accounts, like those of Xenophon, describe the existence of these tribes, offering a glimpse into their early history and interactions with neighboring civilizations.

The geographical landscape of Kurdistan, with its rugged mountains and harsh climate, has significantly influenced the development of Kurdish society. The physical isolation provided by these mountains has not only protected the Kurdish people from various invasions but has also helped preserve their distinct language, customs, and traditions over centuries. This geographic and climatic backdrop is essential for understanding the resilience and endurance of Kurdish culture, particularly in the face of external pressures and conflicts.

Music is one of the most vital components of Kurdish culture. It is more than just an art form; it is an integral expression of Kurdish identity and a means of preserving and conveying the history, values, and emotions of the Kurdish people. Kurdish music is deeply connected to the social, religious, and daily life of the Kurds, encompassing a wide range of genres that reflect the joys and sorrows of the people. From the rhythmic dances that celebrate communal solidarity to the melancholic melodies that express the hardships endured, Kurdish music is a living archive of the people's collective memory.

In this study, a comprehensive analysis of Kurdish music will be undertaken to understand its origins, development, and role within Kurdish society. The research will draw on a variety of sources, including historical texts, oral traditions, and field studies, to provide a nuanced understanding of how music has evolved and how it continues to play a critical role in maintaining Kurdish cultural identity.

The use of references in this study is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it allows for the verification of historical claims and provides a foundation for the analysis presented. By referencing credible sources, such as ancient texts, scholarly articles, and historical documents, the study ensures that the information is accurate and grounded in established research. Secondly, referencing acknowledges the work of previous scholars and contributors, situating this research within the broader academic discourse on Kurdish history and culture. Finally, proper referencing enhances the credibility of the study, allowing readers to trace the sources of information and further explore the topics discussed.

This research not only seeks to document the rich cultural heritage of the Kurdish people but also to contribute to the ongoing dialogue about their history and identity. By examining the interconnectedness of history, geography, and music, the study aims to shed light on the unique characteristics of Kurdish culture and the ways in which it has been preserved and adapted over time. Through this exploration, the research hopes to provide a deeper appreciation of the Kurdish people and their enduring cultural legacy.

2. CHAPTER TWO: MUSIC OF "HALPARKE"

This chapter focuses on the musical elements of "Halparke," a traditional Kurdish dance. Nine of the most significant rhythms that are commonly performed in Sanandaj, and which are highly regarded by musicians, have been analyzed. These rhythms are as follows:

1. Geryan
2. Pasht Pa
3. Fattah Pasha'i
4. Lah Blan
5. Khan Amiri
6. Si Jar
7. Shalan
8. Zangi
9. Chapi

The rhythms have been transcribed with an analytical approach to facilitate comparative analysis. For clarity and ease of understanding, the musical phrases of each rhythm have been written independently, sometimes deviating from standard measure lines. To synchronize the phrases with the dance movements, each phrase is written on a separate line, and double lines indicate the end of a phrase. It should be noted that the phrases are continuous without additional pauses, and the rhythm is written separately below the five-line staff. In the notation of the rhythm, notes with stems pointing upwards represent high notes played with the "Toul" (a type of drumstick) on the right-hand drum, while notes with stems pointing downwards represent low notes played with the "Guchan" (another type of drumstick) on the left-hand drum.

Sequence of Sounds: This includes all the sounds played in the given rhythm. The importance of these sounds in their sequence is shown through different note values. Whole notes represent the final sound, half notes for the main sound, quarter notes for sounds of secondary importance or notes that are held temporarily, and eighth notes for passing or ornamental notes. It should be noted that in the transcription of Iranian music, intervals do not necessarily correspond directly to Western music notation. In this collection, especially due to the performance on the Sorna (a traditional wind instrument), intervals may vary and sometimes only relatively match the notated intervals.

Meter: Kurdish dances are generally performed with a specific meter. No instance of an unspecified meter was observed. This specific meter is likely due to the need for group dancing, requiring synchronization among many dancers. The rhythms

include simple, compound, and irregular meters, and each rhythm is always played with a specific meter. The meters notated here are used primarily for transcription purposes in Iran and do not necessarily correspond to Western examples. For instance, the duration of eighth notes in the rhythm "Pasht Pa" is not always exactly the same throughout. The reason for treating them as equal is that, upon repetition of the rhythm, the actual execution may not have uniform note lengths.

Rhythm: In the comparative analysis of movements with rhythm, rhythm is seen as a rhythmic phrase in this collection. Based on this, rhythmic phrases in each rhythm, regardless of the execution technique, are presented in sequence at the end of the transcription, and they are studied in Chapter Four. Additionally, the notated rhythms are written as close as possible to the original performance for ease of transcription and reading.

Musical Phrases: The musical phrases are generally simple, limited, and repetitive. In some rhythms, there is a main phrase, while the other phrases either vary upon or repeat it. This main phrase is also written separately. The cadences are generally short and descending.

Tempo: The tempo in all the rhythms increases progressively, both within a single rhythm and in the sequential progression of the rhythms. "Halparke" begins with relatively slow rhythms (such as "Geryan") and gradually speeds up. After performing a series of fast rhythms, slower and calmer rhythms are played, which not only add variety but also help the dancers rest.

Dynamics: The rhythms are generally performed loudly, with the dynamics varying between moderately loud and very loud throughout the performance. In this collection, the faster rhythms are performed more loudly, while the slower rhythms are relatively quieter.

For each rhythm, the musical phrases and rhythm are first written on separate lines. If the rhythm has a main phrase, it is written first, followed by the sequence of sounds, cadences, and rhythmic phrases in order. The starting point of the dance movements is marked with a ↓ symbol, and the stopping point is indicated by the letter I underneath it.

3. CHAPTER THREE: "HALPERKES MOVEMENTS"

This chapter explores the traditional Kurdish dance movements known as "Halperkes," particularly those from Sanandaj. The dances are performed by trained groups, with some artistic and theatrical elements added. Although variations exist in the execution and number of Halperkes depending on the setting (village vs. city), core principles remain consistent. For instance, the dance "Geryan" always begins each round of movements. The foot movements, while varying slightly among dancers, adhere to a basic pattern of six steps.

The focus of this chapter is on the fundamental forms of these movements, excluding any added theatrical elements or individual creativity. The measurements and angles of each movement are approximate, given the inherent flexibility in dance. These dimensions are based on the dancer's shoulder width, foot size, arm length, and other body parts. Movements are analyzed both longitudinally and latitudinally, with distances and angles measured accordingly.

Measuring Movements:

- Longitudinal Movements: Measured by the leg, foot, arm, forearm, etc.
- Latitudinal Movements: Measured by shoulder width, foot width, and similar metrics.

General Movements of Body Parts:

- Foot Movements: Feet are key in Halperkes, often moving inward and close to the body with powerful, assertive actions, sometimes involving a jump or a strong emphasis on certain steps. Movements might include hopping or stepping, with variations such as simple, small, or with a leap.
- Knee and Waist Movements: Unlike many other dances, there are no significant rotational or linear movements in the waist area in Kurdish Halperkes.
- Hand Movements: Hands are typically held in specific positions, either gripping each other or placed on the shoulders of neighboring dancers. The choreography involves symmetry and coordination among the group.
- Torso and Shoulder Movements: The torso remains mostly upright with minimal movement, supporting the overall stability of the dance.
- Head and Neck Movements: These movements are minimal, often just following the direction of the feet.
- Facial Expressions: Generally neutral, with rare expressive movements except in certain dances like "Shalan," which involves more theatrical facial expressions.

Differences in Male and Female Movements:

- Foot Movements: Women's movements are generally more inward and angular due to their physical structure and traditional clothing, while men's movements are more straightforward and outward.
- Hand and Shoulder Movements: Men's movements are typically more robust, while women's movements are softer and more contained.

Specific Dances Analyzed:

1. Geryan: A slow, introductory dance that sets the tone for the sequence.
2. Poshte Pa: A dance performed after Geryan, characterized by steps that involve one foot crossing behind the

other.

3. **Fattah Pasha'i:** A more lively and brisk dance compared to the previous ones, featuring quick movements.

4. **Le Blan:** A softer dance known for its distinctive clapping and sitting-down movements.

5. **Khan Amiri:** A well-known dance with movements that are synchronized with musical beats.

6. **Si Jar:** A powerful, energetic dance involving high leaps and intense footwork.

7. **Sha Lan:** A humorous and slower dance that mimics the movements of someone in pain or discomfort.

8. **Zangi:** A fast-paced and agile dance, traditionally performed but now less common.

9. **Chepi:** A widely performed dance with small, in-place movements, often following more intense dances.

This chapter details each movement's execution, focusing on the precision of the dance steps, hand positions, and overall body alignment. The measurements provided are intended to offer a guide to the dancer's posture and the spatial relationship between their body parts during these traditional Kurdish dances.

4. CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MOVEMENTS AND MUSIC

Comparative Analysis of Movements and Music

In this chapter, various movements are analyzed and matched with rhythmic beats and musical phrases. The foot movements are first examined and their synchronization with musical beats is visually represented for better understanding. Then, specific and distinct movements of the hands and other body parts are analyzed in conjunction with the music.

This section focuses on the comparative analysis of different rhythmic patterns with music:

Synchronization of Movements with Music in the "Geryan" Rhythm

Analysis and Synchronization of Foot Movements with Beats and Rhythmic Phrases:

The "Geryan" rhythm has a defined meter and is in a three-beat time signature, represented by 3/43/43/4. Each foot movement takes one measure, and a complete cycle of foot movements consists of six measures. In this rhythm, the foot movements include specific emphases that align with the beats:

- Movements 1, 2, 3, and 5: In these movements, there are two primary emphases. The first emphasis is on the first beat, executed strongly with the heel of the foot. The second emphasis occurs on the second beat, followed by a wave-like movement from the heel to the ball of the foot on the third beat.

- Movements 4 and 6: These movements involve a pause, occurring on the first beat of the corresponding measures. A small hopping movement sometimes follows the pause after movement 6, preparing the right foot for the next cycle of movements.

Figure 1: Synchronization of Foot Movements with Rhythmic Beats in "Geryan"
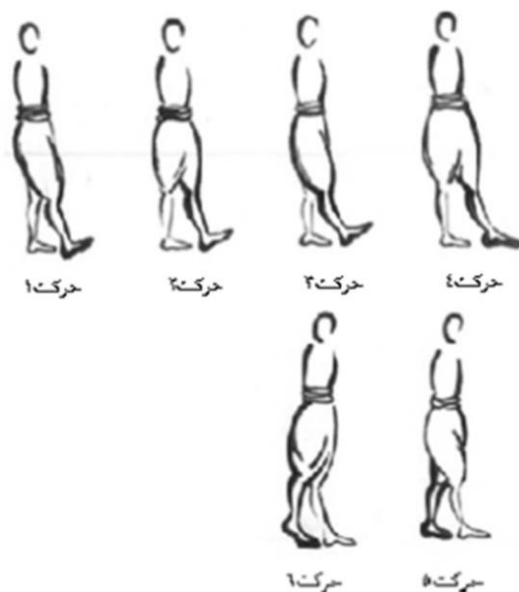
Analysis and Synchronization of Foot Movements with Musical Phrases:

Musical phrases are usually four measures long or shorter, and the pauses and transitions in foot movements do not necessarily coincide with the end of the musical phrases. Similarly, hand movements are analyzed and synchronized with the

beats and rhythmic phrases. For instance, in the "Chopi Kish" hand movement, the forward and backward motion of the hands occurs in two stages with varying speeds.

Synchronization of Hand Movements with Rhythmic Beats and Musical Phrases

In the "Geryan" rhythm, hand movements are also carefully synchronized with the music. The hand movements, particularly those of "Chopi Kish" and "Gavani," follow distinct patterns:

- Chopi Kish Hand Movements: The hands perform a linear motion in two stages. The first stage, which involves the forward movement, is slower, while the second stage, the backward movement, is quicker and more forceful. This motion resembles a pendulum, with the return movement being faster and more dynamic. Each forward and backward motion corresponds to one measure, with the forward movement occurring on the first beat of the measure and the backward movement starting on the second beat and extending to the third beat.

- Gavani Hand Movements: The left hand in "Gavani" mirrors the right hand in "Chopi Kish," following a similar pattern. In another variation of "Gavani" hand movements, there is a rotation of the wrist in addition to the linear forward and backward motion. The wrist rotation during the backward movement aligns with the first beat of the measure, and the rotation during the forward movement aligns with the second beat. This variation introduces an additional complexity to the hand movements, making them more intricate and expressive.

Synchronization of Hand Movements with Musical Phrases:

The hand movements do not always align perfectly with the musical phrases. The cycle of hand movements often finishes before the musical phrase concludes, indicating that the hand movements are more rapid and dynamic compared to the length of the musical phrases.
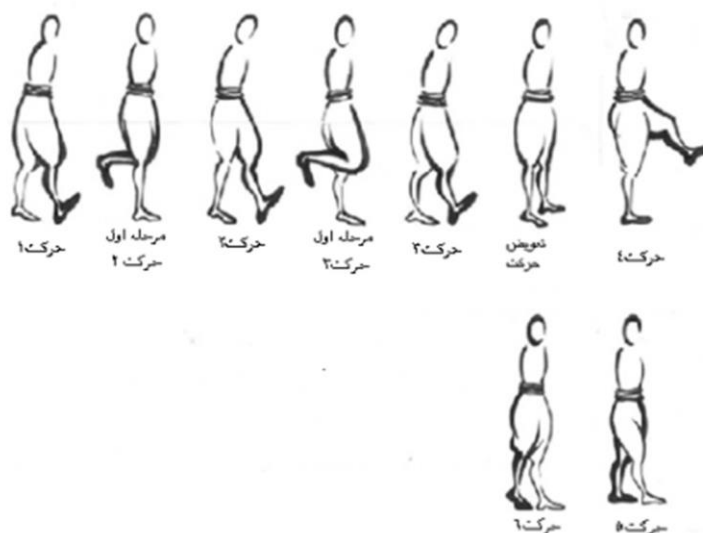
Synchronization of Movements with Music in the "Pusht Pa" Rhythm

Analysis and Synchronization of Foot Movements with Beats and Rhythmic Phrases:

The "Pusht Pa" rhythm has a defined meter in a three-beat time signature, similar to "Geryan." Each foot movement takes one measure, and a complete cycle of foot movements consists of six measures. The movements are as follows:

- Movements 1, 2, and 3: These movements involve two stages. The first stage, where the foot bends and moves backward, occurs on the second beat of the corresponding measures. The second stage, where the heel strikes the ground, happens on the first beat of the corresponding measures.

- Movement 4: This movement involves lifting the left foot, which corresponds to the fourth measure. The right foot performs a hop during this movement, with the first hop occurring on the first beat and the second hop on the second beat.

- Movements 5 and 6: These movements involve stepping backward. The left foot steps down on the first beat, and the right foot follows, with a hop occurring on the second beat. The right foot then performs a hop as it prepares to repeat the cycle.

Figure 2:Steps and Foot Movements in "Pusht Pa

Analysis and Synchronization of Foot Movements with Musical Phrases:

The musical phrases in this rhythm are often two or four measures long. While the foot movements align with the beats, they do not always coincide with the ends of the musical phrases, creating a layered rhythm where the movement and music interweave rather than follow a strict one-to-one correspondence.

Synchronization of Hand Movements with Rhythmic Beats and Musical Phrases in "Pusht Pa"

Chopi Kish Hand Movements:

During the "Pusht Pa" rhythm, the "Chopi Kish" hand movements again involve a linear motion, but with an added emphasis on the rhythmic beats. Each forward and backward motion corresponds to one beat, with the forward motion occurring on the first beat and the backward motion on the second beat.

Gavani Hand Movements:

The "Gavani" hand movements in this rhythm follow a similar pattern, but with the addition of wrist rotation. The wrist rotates backward on the first beat and forward on the second beat, mirroring the motion of the "Chopi Kish" hands.

Synchronization of Hand Movements with Musical Phrases:

Similar to the "Geryan" rhythm, the hand movements in "Pusht Pa" do not perfectly align with the musical phrases. The hand movements often finish before the musical phrase ends, indicating a more rapid and dynamic hand motion compared to the length of the musical phrases.
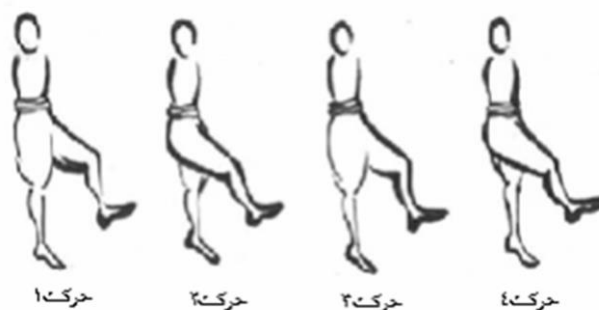
Synchronization of Movements with Music in the "Fatah Pasha'i" Rhythm

Analysis and Synchronization of Foot Movements with Beats and Rhythmic Phrases:

The "Fatah Pasha'i" rhythm is characterized by a two-beat time signature, with each movement taking one or two measures to complete. The cycle of foot movements spans six measures:

- Movements 1 and 2: Each movement takes one measure, with the foot that remains on the ground performing two hops, corresponding to the first and second beats of the measure.
- Movements 3 and 4: These movements take two measures each, with the foot on the ground performing four hops during each movement, aligning with the beats of the measures.

Figure 3: Foot Movements and Hops in "Fatah Pasha'i"

Analysis and Synchronization of Foot Movements with Musical Phrases:

The musical phrases in this rhythm are often two or four measures long, and they align more closely with the foot movements due to the shared multiple of 2 in both the foot movements and the musical measures. The dynamic and repetitive nature of the music matches well with the powerful and repetitive foot movements.

Synchronization of Hand Movements with Rhythmic Beats and Musical Phrases:

The "Chopi Kish" and "Gavani" hand movements in this rhythm involve linear motions that correspond to the beats. The backward and forward wrist rotations in "Gavani" align with the beats, providing a sense of rhythm and movement that matches the energetic nature of the footwork.

General Observations on Movement and Music Synchronization

Across all the rhythmic patterns discussed, the synchronization of movements with music varies in its precision. While some movements align closely with the beats and musical phrases, others create a more complex, layered interaction with the

music, where the movements and music interweave rather than follow a strict, synchronized pattern. The hand movements, in particular, often finish before the musical phrase ends, indicating a faster rhythm in the body movements compared to the music.

In conclusion, the movements in these traditional dances are deeply tied to the rhythms and beats of the accompanying music, yet they also possess an independent dynamism that allows for a rich interplay between movement and sound. This analysis highlights the complexity and beauty of the synchronization between movement and music in these traditional rhythms.

5. CONCLUSION

Kurdish dance is a sequence of symbolic movements inspired by the culture and rituals of the Kurdish people. Since music is an inseparable part of it, it is never considered independent, and an abstract analysis of it is not possible. A comprehensive examination of both dance and music reveals the significance of elements such as the emphasis on the presence of the circle as a place for music and dance, gender and morality, the acceleration of time, the coordination of performers, the synchronization of auditory, visual, and physical elements, and the modulation from one rhythm to another.

Reflecting on the concepts mentioned in the manuscript, the following points come to mind:

1. The Relationship between Men and Women: Kurdish dance places women in an equal position, endowed with the same power as men. Men and women move hand in hand, side by side. In the dance circle, the concept of gender is viewed in a transcendental way within the social thought, and the difference between male and female is obscured. Holding hands signifies unity and solidarity in life, and morality becomes an internalized concept within the collective and ethnic consciousness, transcending external appearances.

2. The Dance Circle: The orientation of music and movements in all dances is to define the shape of the circle. Movement within the circle activates all dimensions of a person's personality and forces. The circular movement of the dancers leads to stability and concentration around a single axis on one hand, and the equalization of classes and moral judgments on the other.

3. Stillness, Slow Movement, and Acceleration over Time: The dances begin slowly, reflecting the characteristics of the start of any action. The group of dancers, holding hands, starts "Halparke" slowly and calmly. This calmness provides the opportunity for the dancers to concentrate and synchronize their body and mind with the new conditions (joining the group and performing "Halparke"). After concentration and coordination are achieved, the more agile and passionate rhythms are performed. Following several vigorous rhythms, a relatively slower one is performed to provide calmness and rest, allowing the dancers to regain focus.

4. The Interdependent Essence of Music and Movement: The music and movements of "Halparke" are interconnected and involve an effective natural force and mutual interaction between musicians and dancers. The drummers and Sorna players stand in the center of the dance circle and, while playing, constantly change their positions and move. The transition from one rhythm to another is carried out through mutual coordination between the dancers and the musicians. In performing the rhythms, the musicians have personal styles and creativity, and each time they offer a fresh and different interpretation of the original rhythm stored in memory, while the overall structure of the rhythms remains consistent.

5. Defined Meter as a Manifestation of Dance and Music: Kurdish dances are essentially performed with a defined meter. The reason is the collective nature of Kurdish dancing; without a defined meter, group coordination would not be possible. The defined rhythm leads to harmony and the alignment of unconscious and chaotic elements of existence. The meter in rhythms serves as a unifying and invariant element (except in processes of acceleration and deceleration). Each rhythm is always performed with its specific defined meter. The defined meter in the music of Kurdish dances plays a role in both balancing human beings with the cosmos and unifying and coordinating the members of the group. In these dances, all strong movements and halts occur on the beats, and the initial phases and weaker parts of movements occur on the offbeats.

6. Categorization of Musical Phrases in Relation to Foot Movements: In examining musical phrases with foot movements, dances are categorized into three groups:

   (a) First Category: Dances in which the cycle of foot movements exactly matches the musical phrase; the duration of the cycle of movements and the musical phrase are equal, and the beginning and end of both are synchronized. These rhythms have a fixed and defined musical phrase that is repeated throughout the rhythm. Sometimes the repetitions are identical, and sometimes minor variations are seen. In the present collection, the dances "Leh Belan" and "Khan Amiri" fall into this category.

   (b) Second Category: Dances in which the cycle of movements equals the length of the musical phrase, but the starting and ending points do not coincide. In this category, the cycle of movements starts and ends at specific points within the musical phrase that do not align with the start and end of the musical phrase. These rhythms have a fixed and defined musical phrase that is repeated throughout the rhythm. In the present collection, the dance "Zangi" belongs to this category. The dance "Si Jar" in this collection falls into the second category, but in comparison with other audio samples, it should be placed in the first category.

(c) Third Category: Dances in which the cycle of movements does not correspond to the musical phrase; in this category, the musical phrases are performed freely and fluidly, the lengths of the phrases are not equal, and there is no specific adherence to the number of measures, repetitions, or cadences. In the present collection, the dances "Geryan," "Pusht Pa," "Fatah Pasha'i," "Sheilan," and "Chepi" fall into this category.

From the above categorization, it can be concluded that the dances whose music has a single fixed phrase and where no additional melodies have been added over time fall into the first or second category. The reason may be that in these rhythms, the ability to apply personal style and creativity by the musician is limited, and if the musician applies changes beyond minor adjustments, the rhythm will be disrupted. Furthermore, these dances are among those that are less commonly performed in Kurdish dance circles and are not always executed; this congruence might be due to their infrequent performance and preservation in their original form. If we were to add philosophical reasoning to the aforementioned scientific reasons, it may be assumed that:

- The single-phrase pieces are rooted in a period before the proliferation of elements, and the correspondence between movement and music in them is inevitable. (In the early stages of human life, the perception of multiplicity is less likely.)
- The single-phrase pieces belong to the remnants of melodies that have the closest affinity with ancient musical concepts, and their dance movements are more authentic.

Unfortunately, the lack of reports and documented records of the earliest performances of these dances and their music always raises the question of how the original forms of these performances were and whether there was an exact correspondence between the music and movements. It might be possible to reach some conclusions through philosophical analysis, such as the two aforementioned points, which could serve as the basis for new research. Additionally, the geographical expanse of Kurdistan and the resulting differences in the performance of these dances in various regions present researchers with a wide range of diversity, making a unified and comprehensive study of this subject a difficult task that requires a significant amount of time.

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