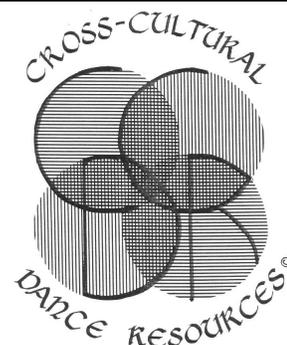


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CCDR Newsletter

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FOLLOWING ATATÜRK'S LEAD: GENDER AND MODERNITY IN THE TURKISH REPUBLICAN BALLROOMS

by
Danielle J. van Dobben

I filed my Master's Thesis, "Dancing Modernity: Gender, Sexuality and the State in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic," in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of Arizona in August 2008. The following is based on the final chapter, "Following Atatürk's Lead." The thesis can be found in the CCDR Library.

Introduction

The Republic of Turkey emerged as a secular nation under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the aftermath of World War I and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Atatürk founded the republic in 1923 and then implemented a series of radical reforms aimed at establishing a democratic, secular political system that oriented itself towards Europe and Western civilization. This article investigates the role of dancing in the Republican ballrooms of the late 1920s and early 1930s in Turkey, especially in shaping new social values regarding gender and sexuality. I ask: What work did dance do in the making of Turkish modernity? Ballroom dancing, as it was performed by the new cadre of military officials and bureaucrats, was meant to display ways of being "modern" to the Turkish people. Ottoman dance practices that expressed explicit and homoerotic forms of sexuality were disavowed because they were considered incompatible with the values and norms of modernity.¹ Ballroom dancing, on the other hand, was intimately implicated in Atatürk's project of modernization and was wielded in the two-pronged process of westernization and nationalism. Ballroom dances like the waltz were particularly useful in this process because they embodied Western gender norms (binary male/female roles) and sexuality (the monogamous couple, romantic love, and the nuclear family). Republican balls organized for the elite framed moral issues about gender and established a sense of what it meant to be modern and Turkish in the early years of the Republic.

Atatürk's legal reforms reshaped the institutions and ideologies of the new nation. However, Atatürk knew that in order to create modern subjects, the will of the state had to penetrate every aspect of social life, impacting bodies through the details of dress, manners, food, music, and dancing. Ballroom dancing in the early Republic did not just reflect new gender norms; dancing actually produced them. Before Atatürk's social reforms reached the general population and transformed everyday life, Turkish elites were waltzing through the ballrooms of the Turkish Republic.

Ballroom dance in the early Turkish Republic

The image of Atatürk dancing with his adopted daughter at her wedding is well-recognized in Turkey (see photo on page 3). It is a poignant vision of the modern shifts that occurred in the Republican era. Opposed to the gender segregated wedding celebrations of the early Ottoman period, in which solo, improvised dancing would have been the norm, in the Turkish Republic bureaucrats and their wives danced the waltz to Western music and dressed in the latest European fashions. The close embrace of Turkish men and women in the waltz signaled the state's emphasis on new social norms regarding romantic love and companionate marriage.

¹ Ottoman dance practices did not disappear, but they became heteronormalized and presented women as the only appropriate object of the male gaze.

Meet Christopher Miller, the Interim Curator for the CCDR Archive at Arizona State University



Christopher Miller is currently serving as Interim Curator for the CCDR archive to oversee transfer of the archives and library collections to the ASU Department of Dance. He is also the Curator for Audiovisual Resources and Musical Instruments at the Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) currently in development in the Phoenix metro area.

Christopher arrived at MIM from Arizona State University Libraries where he previously served as Southeast Asian Studies Bibliographer.

He has worked extensively in Southeast Asia and has language expertise in Indonesian, Burmese, Javanese, and Pa'O (a language of eastern Myanmar). Christopher's audio and document digitization projects have been funded by the U.S. State Department Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (early Burmese recordings), the British Library Endangered Archives Programme (Archive of the Pa'O Literary and Cultural Council Library); the National Science Foundation (Tai Linguistics Field Recordings of William Gedney with Prof. Thomas Hudak); and the Center for Burma Studies (Burmese Field Recordings of Muriel Williamson). He holds a MA in Information Resources and Library Science from the University of Arizona; a MA degree in Music and Southeast Asian Studies from Northern Illinois University; and a Bachelor of Music degree from the North Carolina School of the Arts. His research focuses on media representation of minority cultures, and his musical training includes a range spanning from the Burmese arched harp to Javanese and Balinese gamelan to the saxophone. Recent research papers include: "Information Resources and ICT infrastructure in Myanmar (Burma)" presented to the Southeast Asia Library Group at the EUROSEAS Conference in Naples, Italy; and "Digitization, Popular Culture, and Societies on the Margins: Thoughts on New Directions in Southeast Asia Collections" presented by invitation to the UCLA Libraries and Center for Southeast Asian Studies.



Pak Teh, Christopher Miller & Daniel Ismail in Kedah State, northern Malaysia, 2008. He is pictured with an instrument maker and colleague during a field collecting trip for MIM.

Letter from the President

Dear CCDR members,

It is with great enthusiasm that we launch the new year and look forward to realizing positive changes for our organization. One important effort, which is included with your 2009 membership, will be the creation of a DVD that highlights events from the 1995 Tibet Week, produced by CCDR. Members of our executive board, staff, and volunteers are devoting many hours of time and energy to transferring data and editing the materials. We expect to distribute the final product by the end of March and will provide additional information as well as streaming media in a new section of our web site. Development of our web site is a major goal for the year. We envision updating and reorganizing the various pages and have exciting plans for new content. Also the Collection transition is moving forward and will be completed this year. The third phase, the section of the library devoted to dance books and journals, will come to the Herberger Dance facility in February. Last fall the Kurath and King archives were appraised and then transported to Arizona State University under the supervision of our Interim Curator, Christopher Miller. He also supervised moving the doll and acoustic instruments collections. J. Richard Haefler, ASU Associate Professor of Music and CCDR member appraised the instruments over the holiday break. We extend our deepest gratitude to both Christopher and Richard for sharing their expertise and contributing to the success of CCDR! It is truly an extraordinary time for us; we will keep you updated on developments via our listserv and summer newsletter.

Thank you all for your support and best wishes for a fabulous year!

Pegge Vissicaro



J. Richard Haefler with the instrument collection

CCDR would like to thank our recently renewed members and supporters of 2009:

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Kudos Kerner

Three women, all of whom are outstanding scholars, authors, and long time members of CCDR, received special recognitions in 2008.

- In August Marcia Texler Segal, Ph.D., professor of Sociology and Dean for Research Emerita, Indiana University Southeast, received the Sociologists for Women in Society Mentoring Award.
- Phyllis Hogan, an adjunct professor in both the Biology and Anthropology Departments at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona, was awarded the 4th Annual United Plant Savers (UpS) Medicinal Plant Conservation Award. Hogan is the director and co-founder of the non-profit organization, Arizona Ethnobotanical Research Association (AERA) that is celebrating its 25th anniversary.
- In November Charlotte Johnson Frisbie, Ph.D., professor of Anthropology and department chair Emerita, Southern Illinois University, was honored by the Society for Ethnomusicology with a lifetime membership.

ATATÜRK'S LEAD continued from page 1



ATATÜRK, dancing with his adopted daughter at her wedding, 1929.

Under Atatürk's reforms, women were given the vote, the right to be appointed to official posts and to be elected to Parliament. Divorce by repudiation was made illegal and divorce was made equally obtainable by both men and women. Compulsory and free primary education for all children was instituted by law. However, Turkish scholars have pointed out that emancipation for women in the early Turkish Republic was more of a rhetorical strategy of state-sponsored "feminism" aimed at improving the state of the nation.² As in many parts of the Western world, women's primary roles in the early twentieth century were still those of wife and mother. This "New Woman" was an efficient homemaker, responsible for her family's morality and the success of the nation.³

Women were encouraged to participate in public spaces as markers of Turkey's progress towards modernization. The ballroom was one such space in which the social functions and identities of modern Turkish men and women could be negotiated and formulated. The ordered and clean appearance of public spaces modeled modernity for Turkish citizens and foreign observers.⁴

Yet, Turkish social elites had to be habituated to mixed gender settings. A well-known story in Turkey recalls when Atatürk invited his officials and their wives to a ball and noticed that only the men were dancing. "My friends," he said to the women, "I cannot imagine any woman in the world who would refuse a Turkish officer's invitation to dance. I now order you: spread out through the

dance hall! Forward! March! Dance!"⁵

Ballroom dancing was suitable for encouraging mixed gender interactions because it did not ideally involve sexually explicit movements or displays of desire. The social etiquette that Turks inherited through the rules of ballroom dancing

² Deniz Kandiyoti, "Emancipated but unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish case" in *Feminist Studies*, 13(2) (College Park, Maryland, 1987), 317-338.

³ Zehra F. Arat, "Turkish women and the Republican reconstruction of tradition" in *Reconstructing gender in the Middle East*, edited by Fatma Müge Göçek and Shiva Balaghi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 58.

⁴ Sibel Bozdoğan, *Modernism and nation building: Turkish architectural culture in the early Republic* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 78-79.

⁵ Nilüfer Göle, *The forbidden modern: civilization and veiling* (University of Michigan Press, 1997), 61.

maintained traditional concepts of male guardianship and womanly modesty. The ballrooms of the Republic were constructed as desexualized spaces where bourgeois norms of discipline and self-control were played out. Women were “stripped of a rich sexual explicitness and they strove to produce their unveiled bodies as disciplined and chaste.”⁶ Discourses of self-sacrifice made modern gender reforms the key to the realization of national order and advancement.⁷ If woman is the source and object of man’s desire, then controlling the expression of that desire is virtuous and contributes to social order. The woman does not have an *actual* role in such a concept of order. She merely enables men to achieve the nation. A metaphor for this male-female relationship can be constructed with reference to the waltz, where men frame women in their arms and lead them across the floor. Ballroom dancing provided modern men the opportunity to enact virtue and display their mastery over sexual desire. As Atatürk apparently stated when a foreign lady attempted to lead him to the dance floor, “Madam, when a man and a woman are together, it is best to give the lead to the man.”⁸

The promise of modernity was the public visibility of women, and nationalism depended on a discourse of protection of women. This “modern-yet-modest” woman suffered a duality that left many women in a state of uncertainty.⁹ “Not only was she meant to be active in the public domain, but she also had to present an appropriate visible image becoming her role as mother and/ or daughter of the family and citizen of the nation.”¹⁰ Turkish women marked certain patterns and steps framed in the arms of their male partners, a coupling that represented an emphasis on social order and the companionate relationship between a man and his wife.

It is significant that Atatürk, the head of the new Turkish Republic, danced in public. “Atatürk came to represent and embody the new nation and the ‘new man’ that the republic aimed to create.”¹¹ Atatürk’s top-down reform policies would not have been effective to the extent that they were if they had remained only at the level of legislation. His reforms were effective because they worked at the level of socialization. He modeled, with his own person, the way people were to dress, eat, speak, and move in the modern nation-state. In the Republican ballrooms, dancing the waltz in his top hat and tuxedo, Atatürk performed modernity and invited other social elites to participate in the performance.



ATATÜRK, dancing with Afet Hanim on Ship Izmir, date unknown.

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⁶ Lila Abu-Lughod, *Remaking women: Feminism and modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), 9. (Deniz Kandiyoti, in the same book, proposes that women’s entrance into public space mandated new forms of Puritanism.)

⁷ Yaseen Noorani, unpublished book chapter, 2.

⁸ Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The biography of the founder of modern Turkey* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 1999), 410.

⁹ Afsaneh Najmabadi, *Women, Islam and the state*, edited by Deniz Kandiyoti, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 66.

¹⁰ Carole Woodall, "The Turkish 'modern woman': two press articles, 1924 and 1926," in *The modern Middle East: A sourcebook for history*, edited by Camron Michael Amin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 194.

¹¹ Esra Özyürek, "Miniaturizing Atatürk: Privatization of state imagery and ideology in Turkey," *American Ethnologist* 31(3): 377.

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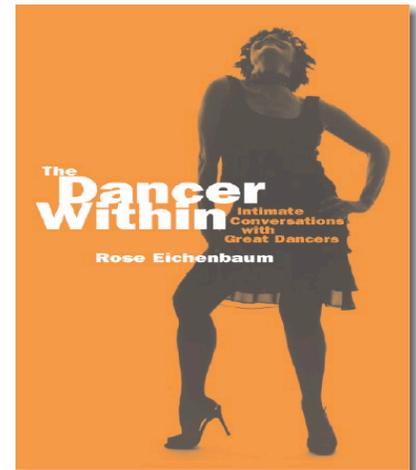
The Dancer Within

Intimate Conversations with Great Dancers
By Rose Eichenbaum

The Dancer Within is an intimate collection of photographic portraits and short essays based on confessional interviews with some of the most beloved dancers and entertainers in America. Well-known on the concert stage, on Broadway, in Hollywood musicals, and on television, the personalities featured in this book speak with extraordinary candor about all stages of the dancer's life—from their first dance class to their signature performances and their days of reflection on the artist's life. The Dancer Within reveals how these artists triumphed, but also how they overcame adversity, including self-doubt, injuries, and aging. Most of all, this book is about the courage, commitment, love, and passion of these performers in their quest for artistic excellence. The reader will quickly realize that “the dancer within” is a metaphor of the human spirit.



ROSE EICHENBAUM is an award-winning photographer and author of *Masters of Movement: Portraits of America's Great Choreographers* (2004). Her work has appeared in *Dance Magazine*, *Dance Spirit*, and the *Los Angeles Times*, and her photographs are featured in a Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibit, *The Dancer Within*, opening in April 2008. She lives in Encino, California. ARON HIRT-MANHEIMER is the author and editor of numerous articles, magazines, and books. He lives in Ridgefield, Connecticut.



The Dancer Within

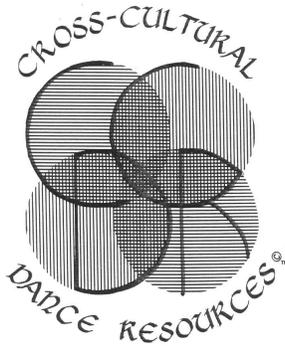
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Our condolences...

- **Daniel Nagrin**, a choreographer, performer, teacher and writer who was known for intensely dramatic solos that became modern-dance classics, died on December 29 in Tempe, Arizona, at the age of 91. Originally from New York City, his choreographic and performing career, began in the mid-1940s, where his unique style combined a fierce lifelong humanism with dance rooted in gesture. Nagrin was widely credited as an inspiration to male dancers and older performers.
- **Anne Pittman**, whose extraordinary life as a dancer, teacher, coach, author, administrator, mentor, friend and competitor, spanned over seven decades, passed away November 25, 2008. Born in Camphill, Alabama in 1918, her accomplishments achieved much recognition in Dance – The National Dance Association Plaudit Award; the San Antonio Dance Festival Award; the National Folk Organization of the USA Award; and the Heritage Award, the highest honor given to dance educators, will be presented posthumously by the National Dance Association at the 2010 convention in Indianapolis.

* Both were supporters of CCDR



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If you are interested in receiving a copy of Theory and methods for an anthropological study of dance by Dr. Joann W. Kealiinohomoku, please read the following: Members \$18.00, non-members \$20.00. Shipping handling is \$5.00 domestic, \$7.00 Canada, \$10.00 Mexico, and \$14.00 other countries. Send checks in United States Funds, made payable to CCDR, to the CCDR Business Office, Cross-Cultural Dance Resources, Department of Dance, P.O. Box 870304, Tempe, AZ 85287-0304.

CCDR 2009 MEMBERSHIP DRIVE:

Since 2003, CCDR's annual memberships have followed the January-to-December calendar year. If your annual membership is current for 2009, we thank you! If you have not renewed, just go online to www.ccdr.org and click on "CCDR Online Payment." Interested in becoming a new member? Click on "Membership Info" to learn more about CCDR membership benefits. Prefer to use the U.S. mail service? Simply fill out the enclosed newsletter insert and mail it together with your payment to the CCDR Business Office address in Tempe.

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NOTE FROM THE CCDR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Executive Director Joann Kealiinohomoku reassures members that the original Cross-Cultural Dance Resources facility in Flagstaff, Arizona, is still open and functioning as the Corporate Office and Research Center. The research files, consultants, and Kealiinohomoku archives are still in Flagstaff.

Research is ongoing in the Flagstaff facility as well as data entering by part time employees. New additions to the CCDR collections will be processed by the Flagstaff office before submission to Herberger Dance. The Kealiinohomoku archives are a work-in-progress. CCDR hopes donations and grants will be forthcoming to support the Flagstaff office and to provide an archivist for the Kealiinohomoku archives.

The CCDR Flagstaff facility is open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by appointment. Telephone 928-774-8108.

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