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KINETOGRAPHY LABAN (MOVEMENT NOTATION) AND THE
FOLK DANCE RESEARCH IN POLAND

I.

The most ancient items about folk dances in Poland derive mainly from XVII and XVIII C sources. These are literary sources in which descriptions of dances are used as ornaments or metaphors. A separate set of sources are musical materials. New and new discoveries of the old music in Poland reveal peasant dances melodies in the contents of tabulators; they are often stylized.

The XIX C brings in Poland a whole series of excellent positions with description of dances. "Lud" (the Folk) of Oskar Kolberg¹ being the main one. In these publications dances are often considered as an equivalent folk culture factor in a set of the collected region materials or even in general characteristics of regions. But only some word descriptions may give instructions good enough to reproduce on this an approximate shape of a dance.

In XX C till 1939 and after the war there appear many material monographs of dances, sometimes of the ethnographical monographs rank². However the impossibility of catching a full movement from of dance material and in result the impossibility of making analysis of dance forms puts in fact the dance folklore problems on one hand on a margin of folkloristic musicology works and on the other hand on a margin of folk customs

¹ O. Kolberg, *Lud...*, 1957—90 (The Folk. ed. 1857—90).

² R. Harasymczuk, *Tańce huculskie*, Lwów 1939. Towarzystwo Ludczawcze (The Hucul-Dances, Lvov 1939, Folk Lore Society).

descriptions in ethnography. Very often the described dance forms unprovided with details and cut out of social and customary context may be helpful at their best only as a material for school and amateur club usage. The fact of unrevealed or wrongly carried off adaptation of authentic dance forms of folk dances for the amateur groups or stage usage makes worse the situation in knowledge of dance folklore. Distinction is much more obscured thanks to that various authorities give for example forms already transformed as typical and authentic. Only few authors appreciated duly the importance of exact delivery of dances information and in commentary they gave their strictures due to the material worked or published by themselves.

Taking films of dances undertaken in Poland from time to time by some amateurs could not solve the problem because these works did not obey the methodical scheme and were not carried out systematically in the whole country and also because of the fact that the film band may be of any help only for a choreologist like a tape recorder for a musicologist. But these helpful means will never stand for a full graphic notation. It is difficult to imagine presently the work for example of a musicologist without music notes.

From the above lapidary introduction one may conclude the situation in the field of knowledge and works of dance folklore in Poland was shaped in a way similar to many other countries of Europe.

The basic change of this situation was brought up in 1937 by works carried on in Warsaw University Ethnographical Department. Then were published some chosen facts in the field of Polish dance folklore drawn on the map. (Vide: the annexed map of folk dances rhythms disposition in Poland). In the same time a set of models illustrating some chosen fragments of Polish dances was exposed in the Polish pavilion on the world exhibition in Paris. Below the plates there were placed melody notations and graphic notations of dance forms by means of Laban-Knust method made by prof. Stanisław Głowacki. These were the first kinetograms of Polish folk dances and in general the first

Plate 1. Both dance movement versions of *kujawiak* shown on the musical rhythmic background in various conceptions.

kinetograms ever exposed in a world exhibition. The second world war destroyed entirely the achievements in this field. There were left only several reproductions of these works in Polish editions and some materials in foreign collections (e. g. Archives Internationales de la Danse — Paris, Kinetographisches Institut Folkwang Hochschule — Essen Werden).

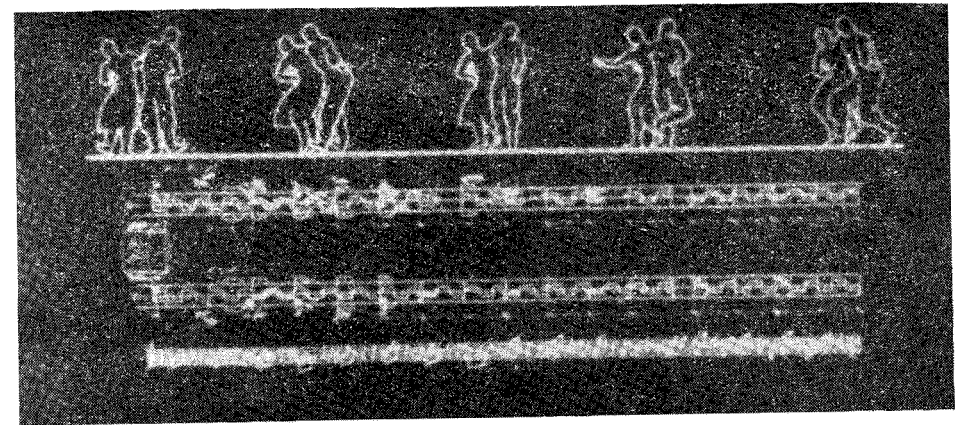


Plate 2. The picture from one of the plates in the Polish pavilion on the World Exhibition 1937 in Paris. (From the Collection of the Kinetographisches Institut-Folkwang Hochschule Essen-Werden Germany).

In 1954 there was created a section of dance folklore researches in Toruń ethnographical centre. Later on basing on these enterprises there was created The Dance Department of Ethnographical Museum in Toruń being the only one till now official section of this type in Poland. Starting the work organisation there was composed an ethnographical inquiry for the dance folklore researches and there was stated the method of investigation taking the dance phenomenon in a historical aspect on the social and customary background*! These materials have been published and in this way made accessible to the persons in concern.

R. LANGE, *Taniec ludowy w pracach Muzeum Etnograficznego w Toruniu* (Folk Dance in the works of the Ethnographical Museum in Toruń) 1960.

Kinetography Laban was introduced as a means of movement notation following thus the tradition of dance folklore researches in Poland.

Further on in 1958 there was created also with the help of the Ministry of Culture and Art section (CPARA) the five years study of kinetography, for future collectors of folk dance, preparing lectures, exercises and instructive materials. 10 persons are just finishing the study this year (some of them begin the didactic work in this field).

Besides the own field investigations the Dance Department of Ethnographical Museum in Toruń has consulted also and conducted since 1960 the works of a small group of people gathering materials in the country to dance folklore. The result of this action is a set of publications being actually prepared to print. All of them are provided with kinetograms. These works, what is very important, were uniformly disposed in the respect of method and successively adjusted, thus there were obtained comparable materials from various regions of the country.

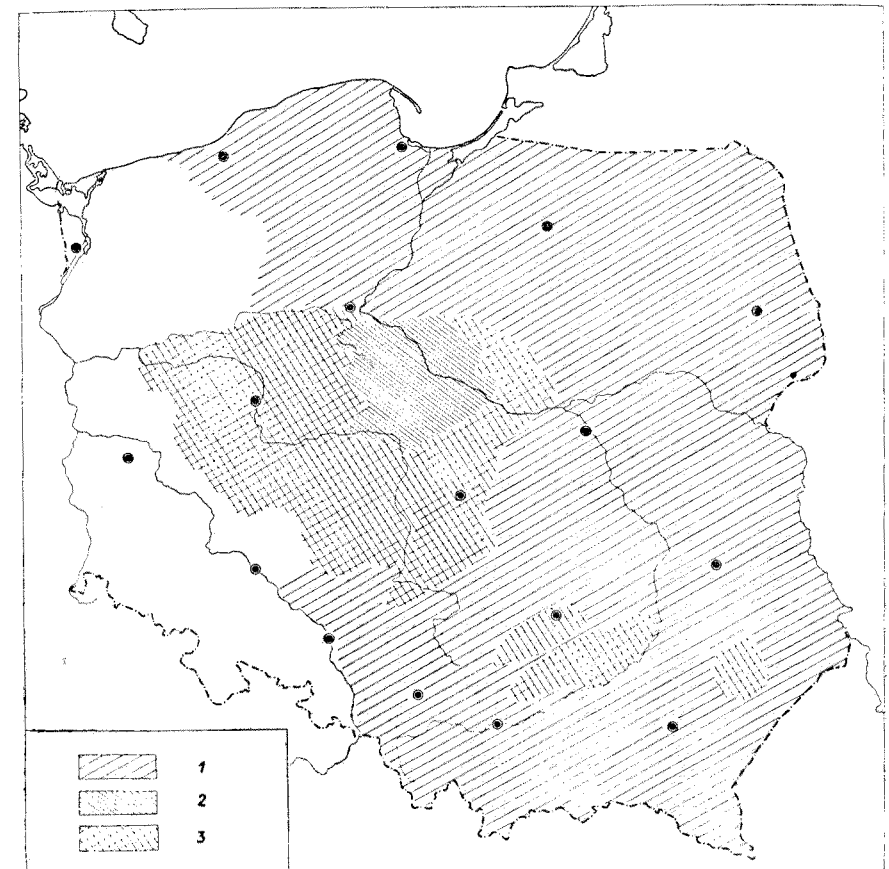
Some amount of single kinetograms of Polish folk dances was meanwhile prepared to print too.

Thus unexpectedly and almost on a margin of other ethnographical works of an already established tradition of investigation there appeared actually in Poland a germ of seriously intended inquiring works on dance folklore taken as an independent chapter in ethnographical works.

II.

Passing to the technical problems a fragment of works carried out in Toruń centre regarding the appointment of the form of one of the Polish folk dances — *kujawiak* will be presented on a single example. The dance *kujawiak* derives from Cuiavia, a region situated between Great-Poland (Wielkopolska), Masovia (Mazowsze) and Pomerania (Pomorze), the land of Dobrzyń and Chełmno. This originally country dance passed with the time to a dance repertory of manors and ball-rooms, and transformed

was spread all over the country. Later schools adapted it to their own usage as well as Academies of Physical Training, the dance teachers and the theatre. So far as the court and ball-room form has had comparatively many descriptions especially in a popular instructive literature — the country form, original in a way to this



Map. 1. The range of occurrence of *kujawiak* in Poland. 1. regions in which *kujawiak* does not occur or there is no evidence of its occurrence; 2. regions in which *kujawiak* occurs beyond dispute as a foreground dance; 3. regions in which *kujawiak* occurs rarely or it is supposed to occur.

dance, has not been recorded if a few general characteristics made in word description are not taken into consideration.

The field investigations concerning the folk dance in Cuiavia carried out in 1954—60 in Toruń centre enabled in result the fixing of the form and specific rhythmic of this dance in its country version.

In both forms *kujawiak* is a round dance performed in couples around the common axis on a circle line. However at the further comparison of both the forms a difference in tempo and rhythm may be observed at once. *Kujawiak* performed in Cuiavia is quicker than the dance „*kujawiak*” known through the country as one of the “national” dances. The rhythmic of the former is very changeful in comparison to the smooth rhythmic of the later. The country *kujawiak* has neither such a simple appearance in movement construction or a pseudo-lyric broad character aspect as it assigned to have thanks to the knowledge of court and ball-room *kujawiak*.

Passing to the analysis of movement material we shall take into consideration the step of both forms of *kujawiak* performed by a single person (not in a couple).

During one bar three steps are made (feet movement connected with change of the weight) with a simultaneous rotation for about 180° round one's axis regarding the entering position and a movement along circle line. The full cycle of this pas takes 2 bars — or the full rotation of a dancer.

In a country form of this dance, admitting in these investigations the $\frac{3}{8}$ metrum as a base one can succeed with a great difficulty in catching the time of the first change. Its value balances between



in different individual interpretations and additionally in relation to the different in aspect of rhythmic composition melodies making the acoustic background of this dance.

The second change during a bar occurs in dependence on the time of duration of the first movement unit in a measure from



till and

The third change is generally easy to catch and lasts during one

The last value fills the deliverance of the unburdened foot combined with a simultaneous shifting of the foot along the floor. Particular proofs of these executive fragments conceptions are presented on the enclosed kinetograms (I, II, III) of variants concluded from a great amount of recorded examples. There is no question we have to do with a fact of movement improvisation adequate in relation to characteristic executive manner in cuiavian music (mainly *tempo rubato* and increase or decrease of tempo even during a short melody section) preserving simultaneously the accord of movement and melody image in the rhythm aspect.

Owing to the results of an analysis precisely carried out by

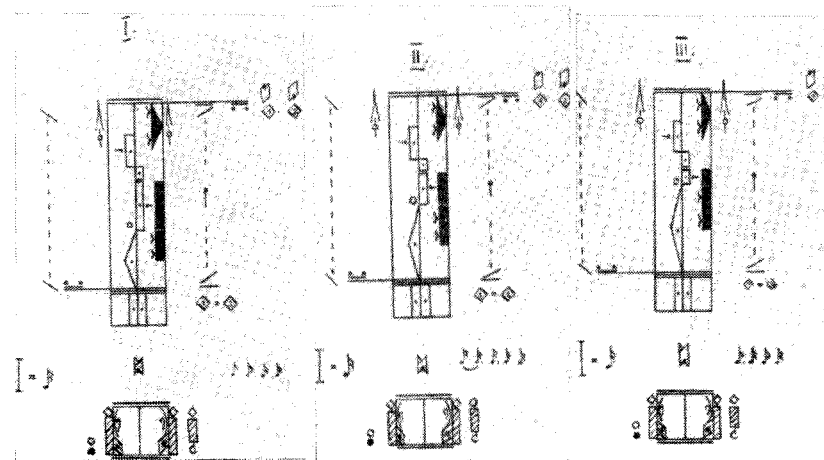


Plate 3. Kinetograms (R. Lange) showing various performances of the dance step of *kujawiak* in its village version.

musicologists on the subject of musical rhythmic of this dance³ and shown in a modern transcription of the melody in further course of deliberation we must take into consideration the fact that $\frac{3}{8}$ rhythm in consequence of rhythmic-agogic changes influenced by *tempo rubato* passes into rhythm of $\frac{5}{16}$. The possibility of such a rhythmic conception proposed by the authors of this transcription and made by them with regard to the specific executive features of a cuiavian musician or singer is fully confirmed in observations of movement scheme of cuiavian step given by country dancers (kinetogram IV). This solution explains convincingly the prolongation of the first movement unit within a bar in comparison to the rest which can be observed in performance of a dancer. It was so difficult to fix the moment of the second change and its time on account of a continuity and fluidity of movement within a measure during the performance of this dance with its whimsical rhythmical appearance at the same

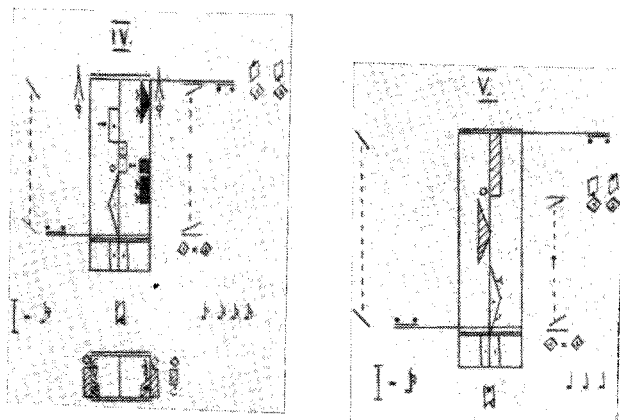


Plate 4, fig. IV. Kinetogram (R. Lange) of the dance step of *kujawiak* in $\frac{5}{16}$ measure; fig. V. Kinetographic transcription of *kujawiak* dance step (R. Lange) in its version of a „national” dance.

³ Sobiescy M. i J., *Tempo rubato u Chopina i w polskiej muzyce ludowej*. (Tempo rubato in the Music of Chopin and in the Polish Folk Music), Muzyka, Warszawa 1960, nr 3.

time (Vide kinetograms I, II, III). Only during a confrontation with this proposal of rhythmic conception in music course this compound movement picture of *kujawiak* step grows justified and evident.

Further on we give a kinetographic transcription of relatively precise word description⁴ of *kujawiak* steps in its version of a „national” dance. It is the most popular scheme (nota bene the dance is there in $\frac{3}{4}$ rhythm) (Kinetogram V). A special stress is not needed to show how much this version of the dance differs from the former one. Even a rough comparison of kinetograms though from their graphic picture aspect shows us great differences between these examples, even so far that strictly speaking we should talk about two different dances.

Results of the above considerations are shown on the enclosed table. For example there was used the transcribed melody already mentioned analysed in musicological aspect. The first line of the table gives the melody scheme in $\frac{3}{8}$ rhythm. The melody presented in such a way enables the reproduction of movement version of „national” *kujawiak*. The second line of the table gives the above spoken kinetographic step transcription of this version of the dance. (The rhythm of $\frac{3}{4}$ is consequently changed into $\frac{3}{8}$ for comparative analysis sake). In continuation of the table there follows the conception of the real performance of the same melody by means of notation introduced nowadays by the musicologists to catch specific executive features of country musicians. Below the table shows the possibility of rhythmic conception proposed after careful rhythm analysis of melody performed in this way. At last at the bottom the table gives the kinetogram of the *kujawiak* step scheme in its country version of Cuiavia, with consequent change of the scale in kinetogram only. In this way it is possible to observe both the dance movement versions on the musical rhythmic background given in various conceptions

⁴ Cz. Sroka, *Metrum muzyczne jako czynnik normujący różny krok taneczny kujawiaka i tanga*. *Kultura fizyczna* 1962/5. (The Musical Metrum as the moment forming in a different way the dance steps of *kujawiak* and tango), *Kultura Fizyczna* 1962/5.

vertically on the table. It is not necessary to stress it extra that so intended corresponding combination of movement and musical motifs was enabled only due to the usage of kinetography.

In the face of these materials the earlier word descriptions of the dance get only now clear and legible (e.g. Kolberg's word comment in "Lud" to the cuiavian dances) because they are completed with background elements in the form of exact movement flow notation.

III.

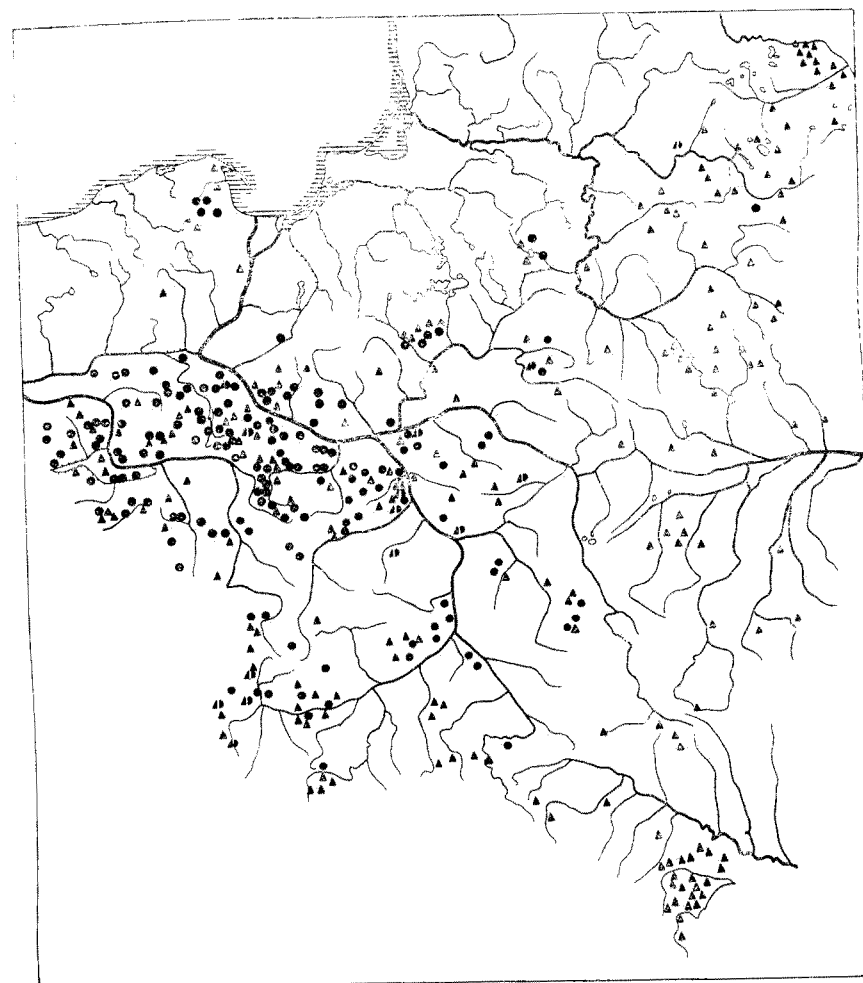
As to the other inquiring problems for example: the range of occurrence of *kujawiak* in Poland the enclosed map presents the results of these investigations. However a great stress must be put here on a hypothesis of this design. The sources being at our actual disposal are very uneven and so different as to their proof value that sometimes it is difficult to conclude even approximately does *k u j a w i a k* in some region occur or not. To get some data the materials obtained in region investigations were analyzed as well as all the accessible printed sources which throw a light upon the problem of musical and dance repertory of each Polish region.

Generalizing the results of analysis of gathered materials the separate ways of hatching the map is accepted for:

- a) regions in which *kujawiak* occurs beyond dispute as a foreground dance in a traditional repertory of the village.
- b) regions in which *kujawiak* occurs rarely or it is supposed to occur.
- c) regions in which *kujawiak* does not occur or there is no evidence of its occurrence meanwhile.

However only the field investigations coordinated and standardized will make accurate the reported here proofs of the *k u j a w i a k* occurrence range statements and in some cases will determine definitely contradictions existing in presently held knowledge on this subject.

Nevertheless the map even in its present state showing the



Folk dance rhythm disposition in Poland
 Black triangles — $2/4$, $2/8$ etc. rhythm. Red wheels — $3/4$, $3/8$ etc. rhythm.
 Map worked out at the Warsaw University 1937 under the guidance of
 Prof. Dr C. Baudouin de Courtenay-Jędrzejewicz. Ed.: Arkady, 1937/5.

kujawiak occurrence range is very interesting for an ethnographer observing the occurrence of other folk culture products. Very remarkable are here coincidences with the results of other musicologic folklore serchings too. Because *kujawiak* formes cover here a part of the country in which dances of mazurek rhythms are prevailing (*kujawiak* — *mazurek* — *oberek*). The ranges of occurrence of the remaining dances of this group in Poland seem to appear quite interesting. Also maps of other aspects of dance folklore would be of a great eloquence here (e.g. dances of magic or ritual character).

The above spoken examples represent some proofs of considering the dance folklore as a product of culture, as an equal factor of this culture in historically taken ethnographical frames. To obtain a full identification of particular dances their forms, variants etc. ... an exact knowledge of particular variants movement forms is needed. Neither the changeable unsteady name of a dance, nor the accompanying it melody can be taken here into consideration as the only criterion of identification. They may complete only the knowledge about the dance the more so that many investigators quote the observations showing the influence of movement form on musical rhythmic formation of musical form rhythmic and musical repertory choice dependence on local taste and likings of country dancers. Therefore it would be rather difficult to omit the movement form of a dance as a base in all investigations concerning the folk dance in future.

IV.

We limited the above considerations purposely to the problem of one Polish dance and in fact to only its essential movement form. It must be said however there is no doubt they concern the much wider problem namely the examination of dance folklore on the whole.

Undoubtedly the general moment in investigations is the problem of uniform inquiry procedure method. The comparable materials only may provide some contribution into further and

wide apprehended dance folklore investigations. The dance as an object of culture cannot be torn out of cultural context during investigation. For seriously apprehended ethnographical investigations the record of even most beautiful movement form of a dance lacking any documentation cannot represent any serious value. However the most important thing is the knowledge of dance form which is complete only while the course of a dance is recorded on paper in a similar way as music by means of note writing. Only then the particular variants may be really compared one with the other.

Nowadays it is impossible to speak about an objectively meant, scientific work on the folk dance subject without a possibility of making analysis of its most essential stuff — its movement aspect. Only the movement aspect may be a basic moment for those designs on condition that it will be uniformly recorded in graphic notation considering the continuity of movement flow, its three demensions and timing. Such a movement writing predisposed to these designs for sure is Labans Kinetography the more so that the structure of this writing enables putting the kinetograms under the note melody record.

Р. ЛЯНГЕ

КИНЕТОГРАФИЯ ЛАБАНА (ЗАПИСЬ ДВИЖЕНИЯ) И ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ПО ВОПРОСУ НАРОДНОГО ТАНЦА В ПОЛЬШЕ

Краткое содержание

В настоящей статье описываются новые исследовательские способы, применяемые в трудах по изучению народного танца в Польше. Этнографический центр в Торуне разработал и опубликовал вопросный лист и метод исследований о формах танцевального фольклора. С 1960 года работает на территории Польши группа людей, специализирующаяся в этой отрасли, постоянно совещаясь с Отделением Танца Этнографического Музея в Торуне. Работа была координирована и благодаря унифицированному методу исследований можно было получить сравнительные материалы. Все участники этой акции приме-

няют в своих трудах полную графическую запись Р. Лабана, так называемую кинетографию, введенную и пропагандированную тоже торунским центром. Затем автор в качестве примера приводит описание процесса исследований, связанных с выяснением трудной задачи формы движений и распространения одного из польских танцев „куявяка“. Именно благодаря применению кинетографии удалось произвести формальный сравнительный анализ этого танца. Было определено, что куювяк, происходящий из куювской деревни и куювяк, танцуемый во всей стране в качестве „народного“ танца — это две совершенно разные формы этого танца. Благодаря этому методу записи можно было графически запечатлеть сложный процесс движения в его деревенской версии, наблюдаемой в Куювии. Анализ был произведен на местном материале, собранном в 1954—1960 г.г. Результаты музыкологических исследований подтверждают наблюдения автора. Анализ доступных произведений позволяет также уловить гипотетический район распространения этого танца на территории Польши, что показано на прилагаемой карте.

В конечных выводах констатируется, что при производстве этого рода исследований нельзя умолчать о форме движения, одновременно записанной. Форма движения должна быть основным критерием идентификации какого-нибудь танцевального варьанта. Анализ танца не может ни в коем случае упустить структуры движения, основного элемента танца.

Система записи Лабана, так называемая кинетография, является наиболее predetermined как средство записи в исследованиях над танцевальным фольклором, запечатлевая в полной графической записи самые важные факторы движения: продолжительность времени, три измерения и регистрируя непрерывность протекающего движения. Кинетограммы, составленные с нотной записью мелодий дают также возможность произвести сравнения материала движения с музыкальным материалом. Кажется неоспоримым утверждение, что сегодня нельзя вообразить себе трудов над танцем, имеющих научный характер, которые бы не учитывали его формы в анализе материала на основании полной графической записи так, как это практикуется в трудах по музыкологии.